

Abstract:

An online system and method for providing information products such as news articles, photos, documents, etc., to remote clients that are users of the system. The system tailors
5 the content and price of the product for different segments of the market. For example, a news provider can sell business articles to one segment of the market for one set of prices, and sports articles to the same or another segment of the market for a different set of prices. Further, the system provides a means for delivering real time account information to the clients so that each client can know the exact status of his account,
10 even as the client is ordering the content.

The system streamlines the entire online order processing and charge processing tasks to minimize the administrative interaction required of the client, thus simplifying and expediting the response and making the system more user-friendly. The inventive system
15 has singular application for ordering and processing information content that is relatively low in unit price, that may have a high volume of requests, and that has to be processed in a minimum amount of time. The system may also apply different prices for the same content to different clients, dependent on factors such as subscription plan membership and usage volume. Still further, the system provides a means for assuring that the
20 provider that the client has sufficient funds in its account to pay for the requested content, even before the content is delivered to the client.